

Edward Arden and the Dudley earls of Warwick and Leicester, c. 1572–1583

Enis, Cathryn

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Abstract

Between c. 1572 and his execution in 1583, Edward Arden, a Catholic gentleman from Warwickshire, was involved in a lineage dispute with Ambrose and Robert Dudley, earls of Warwick and Leicester and two of the most powerful men in early modern England, over their shared ancestral claim to a Saxon known as Turchil. This article explores the significance of this dispute from a number of perspectives, including the ancestry of Edward Arden, the history of the Warwick and Leicester earldoms and Philip Sidney's *Defense of Leicester*, in order to explore lineage as central to the prevailing ideology of power. It uses the clash between Arden and the Dudleys to present an environment in which Catholics were still part of the political mainstream and in which different political discourses led to conflict as well as consensus during the 1570s and early 1580s. Moreover, the article suggests that the activities of the heralds and the pedigrees they produced had a political function during this period which merits changing our approach to an underused manuscript source.

Keywords: Arden, Dudley, Sidney, Glover, Warwickshire, lineage.

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At first sight, events involving Edward Arden, a Catholic gentleman from Warwickshire executed for treason in December 1583, look like an instance of a man drawn into a fight he could not win. The alleged feud between Arden and the earl of Leicester has been consigned to the status of a local affair, and the role of the earl in Arden's downfall as gossip put about by Leicester's enemies.¹ New research into the Catholic Arden family during the Dudley ascendancy in Warwickshire has revealed a conflict in which the Ardens' descent from a Saxon magnate known as Turchil was used to challenge the Dudleys' local dominance as well as the legitimacy of their national position at the centre of Elizabeth's government. Turchil was one of the leading landowners in Warwickshire in 1066 and one of the few Saxons to retain his estates after the Conquest.² He later became central to the descent of the earls of Warwick back to the legendary Guy that was created by the Beauchamps, the family to whom the Dudleys owed their claim to the

¹ The possible link between the Ardens of Park Hall and Shakespeare's maternal family means that brief considerations of the affair can be found in works including Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Stratford-upon-Avon Press, 1897); Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), 157-8; James Shapiro, *1599: a Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber, 2005), 160-1; Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion and Resistance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 104-125; Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare* (London: BBC, 2005), 102-3.

² Ann Williams, 'A Vice-Comital Family in Pre-Conquest Warwickshire', in R. Allen Brown, ed., *Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1988*, Anglo Norman Studies, 11 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1989), 279-295.

earldom.³ In 1559, Robert Dudley was appointed lord lieutenant of Warwickshire and in December 1561 Ambrose Dudley was created earl of Warwick.⁴ In 1562 both brothers adopted the Beauchamp badge of the bear and ragged staff, a motif they proceeded to use whenever possible.⁵ The extravagant use of the bear and ragged staff to stamp the Dudley presence on virtually everything they owned, including items such as nightshirts and nightcaps, showed a commitment to the Beauchamp heritage that can seem comical.⁶ In September 1564, Robert became earl of Leicester.⁷ These titles and the lands granted with them, including the neighbouring castles of Kenilworth and Warwick, made Robert and Ambrose the leading magnates in the Midlands.⁸ Their shared sense of purpose was second to none but it was Robert who became the source and target of Edward Arden's antagonism.

³ Appendix 1: Descent of earldom of Warwick from Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, d. 1439.

⁴ Simon Adams, "'Because I am of that countrye and mynde to plant myself there': Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and the Midlands," in *Leicester and the Court: Essays in Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 320; all further page references for Adams are to this volume unless otherwise stated. See also Adams, 'Dudley, Ambrose (c. 1530-1590)' and 'Dudley, Robert (1532/3-1588)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. 60 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. Hereafter this work will be cited as *ODNB*.

⁵ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 321.

⁶ Elizabeth Goldring, 'The Earl of Leicester's household inventory of Kenilworth Castle, c. 1578', *English Heritage Historical Review*, 2 (2007), 36-58.

⁷ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 321.

⁸ Appendix 2: map of north Warwickshire and part of Staffordshire. This map shows places relevant to the text and the main road routes in the region.

By bringing the dispute between Edward Arden and the earl of Leicester out of the shadows of speculation about Shakespeare's family, this article seeks to widen the debate on the nature of political conflict during the 1570s and early 1580s. It focuses on the connection between contemporary rumours concerning the Dudleys' social origins, the historical associations of the Warwick and Leicester earldoms, genealogical research undertaken for Arden and the Dudleys from around 1572-1582, and Philip Sidney's *Defense of Leicester* in order to show how Edward Arden used his lineage to contest the Dudleys' authority.⁹ Sidney's *Defense* is a source of rare value for understanding the issues at stake and the article makes the case for re-dating this crucial tract.¹⁰ By placing the genealogical research commissioned by the Dudleys and Sidney's *Defense* within the chronology provided by the political tracts *A Treatise of Treasons* (1572) and *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), described by Peter Lake as the 'second instalment' of the *Treatise*, the attack on the Dudleys' ancestry can be seen as part of the wider debate on legitimate authority.¹¹ Events involving the Dudleys and Edward Arden showed the apparent reality of the dangers of Protestant new men to the ancient Catholic gentry. In exploring these events, the need for the Dudleys to exert their authority over Edward

⁹ Other aspects of Arden's life and political career, including the legal cases in which he was involved and the events surrounding his execution, will be explored in more detail in work in preparation.

¹⁰ Dwight Peck, ed., 'Appendix C: Sidney's Defense of Leicester', in *Leicester's Commonwealth* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), 168-177; electronic copy free to access at www.dpeck.info and referred to throughout. Please note that page numbers may not match the printed version.

¹¹ Peter Lake, 'The politics of 'popularity' and the public sphere: the 'monarchical republic' of Elizabeth I defends itself', in Peter Lake and Stephen Pincus, eds., *The politics of the public sphere in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 73.

Arden provides a specific context for Simon Adams's observation of the Dudleys' emphasis on their Saxon ancestry in the 1570s.¹²

Despite Arden's portrayal in historical accounts, epitomised by Alice Fairfax Lucy's description of him as 'poor, proud and defenceless', Arden was a member of the Midlands' most important Catholic political network.¹³ He inherited his estate in 1563 from his grandfather, Thomas, a Warwickshire magistrate for over thirty years, and the family was deeply embedded within the county elite. Arden's father-in-law, Sir Robert Throckmorton, was *de facto* leader of the county and had been one of Queen Mary's most prominent supporters.¹⁴ Sir Robert's first wife, Muriel, mother of Arden's wife Mary, was the sister of Lord Berkeley (d. 1534). Arden's brothers-in-law included Sir Thomas Tresham, Sir William Catesby and Ralph Sheldon. His legal counsel was his cousin, Arden Waferer, principle man of business to Christopher Hatton.¹⁵ Around 1574, his eldest daughter, Katherine, married Edward Devereux, youngest son of the first viscount

¹² Simon Adams, 'The Heralds and the Elizabethan Court: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, as deputy earl marshal', in Nigel Ramsay, ed., *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2014), 1-2, 5-6; Adams, 'Of that countrye', 317.

¹³ Alice Fairfax Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys: the Chronicle of an English Family* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 79; for the local position of the Throckmortons, see Peter Marshall, 'Crisis of Allegiance: George Throckmorton and Henry Tudor', in Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, eds., *Catholic Gentry in English Society, The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 31-68.

¹⁴ Mary had granted Sir Robert a number of offices connected with the earldom that were claimed by the Dudleys soon after Elizabeth's accession. Adams, 'Of that countrye', 321.

¹⁵ Eric St. John Brooks, *Sir Christopher Hatton: Queen Elizabeth's Favourite* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), 150, 301, 359, 389.

Hereford by his second wife and uncle (though near contemporary) of Walter Devereux, first earl of Essex (d. 1576).¹⁶ The Devereux were Protestants but by the mid-1570s Essex had a deep dislike of the earl of Leicester.¹⁷ Arden was also connected to Edmund Plowden through their common kinship with Ralph Sheldon and in 1579, Arden, Plowden, Tresham and another brother-in-law, Sir John Goodwin, became joint trustees of Sir Robert Throckmorton's estate.¹⁸ Sir Francis Willoughby, nephew of the duke of Suffolk (exec. 1554) and Sir Henry Goodere (d. 1595) were also close associates of Edward Arden.¹⁹ Goodere, patron of Michael Drayton, had a career in Elizabethan politics that is still not fully understood. He appears to have been closest to Lord Burghley but was briefly imprisoned for his role in the duke of Norfolk/Mary, Queen of Scots marriage plan.²⁰ Goodere's participation in the earl of Leicester's expedition to the Netherlands has been seen as indicating his reconciliation with the earl but was more

¹⁶ 'Edward Devereux', in *House of Commons 1558-1603*, ed. Philip Hasler, 3 vols (London: HMSO for the History of Parliament Trust, 1981) II, 34.

¹⁷ Paul Hammer, *The polarisation of Elizabethan politics: The political career of Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33.

¹⁸ Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, DR5/964. Hereafter SCLA. Plowden was Sheldon's brother-in-law.

¹⁹ Sir Francis Willoughby and Ralph Sheldon were on Sir John Harington's jury in 'The Apologie' that followed 'The Metamorphosis of Ajax' and Harington also derided Thomas Norton's treatment of Goodere. Elizabeth Story Donno, ed., *Sir John Harington's A new discourse on a stale subject or The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (London: Routledge, 1962), 240-2. For an insight into Harington's selection, see Gerard Kilroy, *Edmund Campion: Memory and Transcription* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2005), 90-96.

²⁰ 'Sir Henry Goodere', in *House of Commons*, ed. Hasler, II, 203.

likely a reflection of his connection to Burghley.²¹ These relationships connected Edward Arden to those at the heart of the Elizabethan polity.

For these men, the public proclamation of descent was central to the struggle for political dominance during the reign of Elizabeth. However, political theory that generally focuses on the ideologies created by different religious groups has left a gap between theory and practice through which lineage has fallen, leaving genealogy defined as predominantly a cultural rather than political pre-occupation.²² Moreover, pedigree rolls have been identified as an under-used manuscript source and although historians have acknowledged the symbolism of descents reaching back into antiquity, their political purpose has been only sporadically addressed.²³ Consideration of heraldic devices assigned by the Elizabethans to figures from the past can be fraught with difficulty, given that heraldry was a medieval practice in which even the earliest devices can only be traced to the twelfth century. Some heralds, particularly Robert Glover, Somerset herald from 1570-1588, have become renowned and Glover set new standards for genealogy.²⁴ Nevertheless, Tudor pedigrees have a mixed reputation and even the exceptional Glover was constrained by the culture in which he worked. The Dudleys were earls and Arden only an esquire yet both understood the essential role that lineage played in the prevailing

²¹ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 334.

²² Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1994), 20-47; Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 99-114.

²³ John H. Baker, 'Tudor Pedigree Rolls and their Uses', in *Heralds and Heraldry*, 125; Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, 130.

²⁴ Nigel Ramsay, 'Glover, Robert, (1543/4-1588)', *ODNB*.

ideology of power. Lineage was fundamental to their dispute and belongs to what Rees Davies usefully termed ‘the sociology of aristocratic lordship’.²⁵ Gentleman were those ‘whom their blood and race doth make noble’ and Sir Thomas Smith noted that men recently awarded arms were ‘called sometime in scorne gentlemen of the first head’, a description used to describe John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, in *Leicester’s Commonwealth*.²⁶ For Edward Arden and the earl of Leicester, lineage – ‘the conjunction of blood and tenure’ – was not a matter of fashion but the basis on which both were asserting their political and territorial rights.²⁷

The ascendancy of the Protestant Dudleys in a county in which the leading political network, led by Arden’s father-in-law, Sir Robert Throckmorton, was predominantly Catholic, had an effect on the county gentry which was reflected in the composition of the commission for the peace.²⁸ Tudor government relied upon the gentry in their role as magistrates and their co-operation with members of the council, a world where the magistrates needed ‘to learn the social skills that gave them access and effect at local and national levels’.²⁹ Edward Arden and his friends and relations had been learning those skills for generations and believed that local power was their right. At the beginning of

²⁵ R. Rees Davies, author, & Brendan Smith, ed., *Lords and Lordship in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

²⁶ Mary Dewar, ed., *De Republica Anglorum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 70-1.

²⁷ Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, 22.

²⁸ Cathryn Enis, ‘The Dudleys, Sir Christopher Hatton and the justices of Elizabethan Warwickshire’, *Midland History*, 39, 1 (April 2014), 1-35.

²⁹ Norman Jones, ‘Of Poetry and Politics: The Managerial Culture of Sixteenth-Century England’, in Peter Iver Kaufman, ed., *Leadership and Elizabethan Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 22.

Elizabeth's reign the Throckmorton kinship network accounted for around a third of Warwickshire magistrates. By 1574, few of this group remained and the list of justices submitted to the council by Edward Aglionby in 1575 was almost entirely composed of known Dudley clients.³⁰ The gentry were essential to the smooth administration of the counties - 'the men without whom nothing was possible' - and the marginalisation of the Throckmortons and their connections was a serious assault upon the political hierarchy in Warwickshire.³¹ Arden and his friends and family were not outsiders looking in, they were insiders being forced out.

However, even though the descent of the Arden estate was not unbroken, nor Arden's family history unblemished, Edward Arden's ancestry enabled him to challenge the earls of Warwick and Leicester.³² Although Robert Dudley has been described as 'less obviously a baseborn new man', some of his contemporaries would not have agreed.³³ In November 1569 the earls of Westmorland and Northumberland warned of the danger to the queen and the ancient nobility of 'new set up nobles' that may have been aimed at the Dudleys.³⁴ In the early 1570s *A Treatise of Treasons* and *The Table gathered out of the*

³⁰ British Library, MS Stowe 570, fols. 15-16. Hereafter BL.

³¹ Neil Younger, 'Henry Herbert, earl of Pembroke', in *Leadership and Elizabethan Culture*, 134-5.

³² Peter Coss, *Lordship, locality and knighthood, a study in English society, c. 1180-1280* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 186-9; Christine Carpenter, *Locality and polity: a study of Warwickshire landed society 1401-1499* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 432, 459.

³³ Adams, 'Favourites and Factions', 50.

³⁴ Stephen Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British succession crisis, 1558-1568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 207; Adams, 'Heralds and the Elizabethan court', in

Treatise of Treasons recast the well-established ‘evil councillor’ discourse as an ‘evil base-born councillor’ discourse.³⁵ In the 1590s Sampson Erdeswick repeated an earlier rumour that the duke of Northumberland had falsely created his descent from Lord Dudley and that Edmund Dudley’s father, John Dudley of Atherington was not a gentleman but a carpenter.³⁶ Robert Glover was identified by Erdeswick as the source of at least the first part of this rumour and Glover had certainly met Erdeswick by 1579.³⁷ The attack on the Dudleys’ origins was two-pronged, challenging their descent from the Suttons of Dudley as well as their presentation of the descent of the Warwick earldom and corresponded to the charge of ‘want of gentry’ challenged by Philip Sidney in the *Defense of Leicester*. William Camden later assigned attacks on the Dudleys’ social origins not only to the earl of Sussex but also to Edward Arden, who had ‘opposed him [Leicester] in all he could, reproached him as an adulterer, and defamed him as an upstart’.³⁸ In 1604, in a document attached to a letter to James I from Henry Goodere, heir to his uncle and namesake, Leicester’s animosity towards Edward Arden was

Heralds and Heraldry, 2. Warwick and Leicester were the only men Elizabeth raised directly to earldoms and in 1569 Burghley was still Sir William Cecil.

³⁵ Michael Questier, ‘Elizabeth and the Catholics’, in Ethan Shagan, ed., *Catholics and the ‘Protestant nation’*, *Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 77-84; Adams, ‘Favourites and Factions at the Elizabethan court’, 49; Lake, ‘The politics of “popularity”’, 61.

³⁶ Adams, ‘Of that countrye’, 314.

³⁷ Adams, ‘Of that countrye’, 314; BL, MS Egerton 3789, fol. 34r.

³⁸ William Camden, ‘1565’, ‘1583’, *Annales* (1625); <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/camden>.

attributed to the earl's belief that 'Mr Arden could lay some clayme to the Earldom of Warwick'.³⁹

Arden's alleged claim to the earldom of Warwick came from his Saxon ancestor, Turchil.⁴⁰ In 1086, Turchil was the dominant magnate in Warwickshire.⁴¹ However, Turchil's son, Siward, lost most of the family's estate to Henry Beaumont, the first Norman earl of Warwick.⁴² Siward and his sons were absorbed into Beaumont's affinity and despite fluctuations in both their fortunes and their relationship with the Warwick earls, the Ardens remained an important family in the county and adopted a coat of arms that inverted that of the Beaumonts (figure 1).⁴³ Siward and his descendants retained some of Turchil's land, including Curdworth in north Warwickshire, in the forest of Arden from which the family took their name.⁴⁴ In the fifteenth century, the scholar-priest John Rous created a seamless link between the Saxon magnate Turchil and the Norman earls of Warwick by falsely depicting Henry Beaumont's wife, a Norman noblewoman called Margaret, as Turchil's daughter on the armorial rolls commonly

³⁹ Claire Talbot, ed., *Miscellanea LIII*, Catholic Record Society (hereafter CRS), (London: 1961), 185-6.

⁴⁰ Appendix 3: simplified descent of the Arden family.

⁴¹ Williams, 'A Vice-Comital Family', 286-7.

⁴² Williams, 'A Vice-Comital Family', 291; David Crouch, 'The local influence of the earls of Warwick, 1088-1242: a study in decline and resourcefulness', *Midland History*, 21 (1996), 3-4.

⁴³ Coss, *Lordship, locality and knighthood*, 186-200; Carpenter, *Locality and polity*, 116, 118, 138.

⁴⁴ Ann Williams and Geoffrey Martin, eds., *Domesday: a complete translation* (London: Penguin, 2003), 659.

known as the Rous rolls.⁴⁵ Rous's account of Oxford halls may have recommended him as a scholar to Richard Neville, earl of Warwick (d. 1471) and his wife, Anne, daughter of Richard Beauchamp (d. 1439), and in the mid-1440s he was appointed chantry priest at Guy's Cliffe.⁴⁶ His rolls, probably prepared in Warwickshire in the 1480s for Anne Beauchamp, gave a visual representation of the history of the earls of Warwick from the legendary Saxon warrior, Guy.⁴⁷ Anne's commission reflected the unusual significance of the female line in the descent of the earldom of Warwick, plausibly suggested as the rationale for the production of the rolls.⁴⁸ Edward Arden's real Saxon ancestors, Alwin and Turchil, as well as the re-cast Margaret, were shown as part of the earldom's lineage from Guy of Warwick, providing a vital source later used by both Arden and the Dudleys (figure 2). The Beauchamp appropriation of Turchil as the link back to Guy of Warwick reflected earlier borrowings from the Ardens already integrated into the legend. Guy, described as 'England's other Arthur', merged pre-Conquest figures with medieval

⁴⁵ Yin Liu, 'Romances of Continuity in the English Rous Roll', in Rhiannon Puck & Michael Cichon, eds., *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 157.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Orme, 'Rous, John', (c. 1420-1492), *ODNB*. Trevor H. Aston, 'The Date of John Rous's List of the Colleges and Academical Halls of Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 42 (Oxford: 1977), 226-36.

⁴⁷ Martha Driver, 'Inventing Visual History: Re-Presenting the Legends of Warwickshire', and David Griffith, 'Owners and Copyists of John Rous's Armorial Rolls', in Wendy Scase, ed., *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 161-202, 203-30. Both Rous rolls survive: College of Arms, MS Warwick Roll, known as the Latin roll. Hereafter CA. BL, MS Additional 48976, known as the English roll.

⁴⁸ Yin Liu, 'Romances of Continuity', 157.

political pre-occupations and was still evolving during the sixteenth century.⁴⁹ Most versions focus on the story of Guy, son of Siward of Wallingford, who married the beautiful Felicia, daughter of the earl of Warwick, and through her acquired the earldom.⁵⁰ As Judith Weiss has discussed, Guy's father possibly drew upon the real Siward, son of Turchil, 'So the name of the hero's father, Sequart, in our romance [*Gui de Warewic*] may have been indebted to Siward, a figure once of much local consequence in the area where the poem was written.'⁵¹ Siward's daughter, Felicia, has also been suggested as the most likely model for Guy's wife, Felicia.⁵² The story was widely disseminated among both an elite and a popular audience and was strongly connected to Warwickshire.⁵³ Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton and Shakespeare all refashioned or reused elements of the legend in their own writing.⁵⁴ It was so central to English culture that the chapel on the supposed site of Guy's hermitage was later spared as an 'antiquity'

⁴⁹ Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field, eds., *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), xv.

⁵⁰ Wiggins and Field, eds., *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, 201-2

⁵¹ Judith Weiss, 'Gui de Warewic at Home and Abroad, A Hero for Europe', in Wiggins and Field, eds., *Guy of Warwick, Icon and Ancestor*, 9.

⁵² Martha Driver, 'In her owne persone semely and bewteus: Representing Women in Stories of Guy of Warwick', in Wiggins and Field, eds., *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, 136, n. 8.

⁵³ Wiggins and Field, eds., *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, xviii.

⁵⁴ Andrew King, 'Guy of Warwick and the Faerie Queene, Book II: Chivalry Through the Ages', in Wiggins and Field, eds., *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, 169-184; Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Shakespeare: Upstart Crow to Sweet Swan, 1592-1623* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2011) 11-19.

by Civil War troops.⁵⁵ The Ardens had a unique family identity that reflected their ancient connection to Warwickshire and Turchil's manor of Curdworth was still the most important manor in Edward Arden's estate.

The terms of Arden's tenure played a central role in the dispute between Arden and Leicester. After Arden's death, the earl was accused of wanting his land and the inquisition into Arden's estate in 1584 described Curdworth as 'holden of her ma[jes]tie in fee socage in the righte of the mannor of Sutton Coldfield somtyme p[ar]cell of therldom of Warwick'.⁵⁶ From the mid-1570s until around 1582, Edward Arden was subject to a series of legal challenges that destabilised his tenure of his estate. By 1575 he was involved in a territorial dispute with his neighbour to the west, Edward Holte, brother-in-law of Henry Knollys and a close associate of the Dudleys.⁵⁷ Arden's refusal to wear the Dudley livery, an outright rejection of their lordship, is traditionally dated to the same year.⁵⁸ In 1576 Arden and Holte agreed to arbitration, with Holte represented by George Digby and Arden by his brother-in-law, Thomas Throckmorton, in pairings that reflected the growing fissure in the county.⁵⁹ Holte's action against Arden was

⁵⁵ Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, & Memory in Early Modern Britain & Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 136.

⁵⁶ The National Archives, SP12/176/1, fol. 208v. Hereafter TNA; Birmingham City Archives, MS917/1094 (Norton 211). Hereafter BCA.

⁵⁷ BCA, MS917/496 (Norton 184); Adams, 'Of that countrie', 333-4, 340-1.

⁵⁸ William Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (London: 1656), 681.

⁵⁹ BCA, MS917/496 (Norton 184). George Digby was one of the Dudleys' officers; Adams, 'Of that countrie', 340-1. Holte was executor of Digby's will; TNA, PROB11/70, fols. 245v-246v, will of George Digby.

followed by similar actions from Ralph Rugeley and Raphael Massey, men who were also connected to the Dudleys.⁶⁰ In 1578 Ralph Rugeley accused a group of Arden's tenants of trespass, initiating a dispute that continued until the early 1580s and moved from Warwick assizes to Star Chamber.⁶¹

In the summer of 1578, Arden was among the Midlands gentry who tried to prevent the earl of Leicester from acquiring Drayton Bassett, a manor on the Warwickshire/Staffordshire border to the north of Curdworth and one of the Dudleys' most important purchases in the region.⁶² There is far more to be said about events at Drayton than can be addressed here, but Arden's involvement confirms his position among the region's leading gentry and the tension caused by the Dudleys' territorial expansion. The acquisition of Drayton was accompanied by two serious riots and intermittent disorder in the summer of 1578, apparently orchestrated by north Warwickshire and south Staffordshire gentry and more or less ignored by Lord Paget and the Staffordshire justices until the Privy Council intervened.⁶³ Those accused of furthering the disorder at Drayton were substantial men. Chief among them were Sir Francis Willoughby, Walter Harcourt, William Stanford, Henry Goodere, Edward Arden and the families of Pudsey, Gibbons and Harman who were the leading gentry in the

⁶⁰ Raphael Massey was one of Ambrose Dudley's yeomen and participated in his funeral. CA MS, Dethick's Book of Funerals, II, fol. 212. Massey and Rugeley were also cousins; TNA, PROB11/39/232; will of John Rugeley.

⁶¹ SCLA, DR18/3/19/2; TNA, STAC5/A17/34, STAC5/A34/7, STAC5/A55/39.

⁶² Adams, 'Of that countrye', 329.

⁶³ Dwight Peck, 'The Earl of Leicester and the riot at Drayton Bassett, 1578', *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 27 (April 1980), 131-35; Adams, 'Of that countrye', 339-41, 'Baronial contexts?', 388-9.

town of Sutton Coldfield.⁶⁴ These men had strong links with the court and the legal establishment. Sir Francis's sister, Margaret Arundell, was a member of Elizabeth's privy chamber and he later appealed to her for help.⁶⁵ Walter Harcourt was the son of Simon Harcourt (d. 1577) of Stanton Harcourt and William Stanford was the son of the Marian judge, Sir William Stanford (d. 1558).⁶⁶ Some of the men involved at Drayton were known or suspected Catholics (Arden, Harcourt, Stanford and Goodere) but others were not, including Sir Francis Willoughby and the men from Sutton Coldfield, although none could be described as advanced Protestants. Rather, one geographical factor united all of these men and that was the potential threat to their autonomy should the Dudleys attempt to enforce their overlordship through the earldom of Warwick, as their estates and the town of Sutton Coldfield all fell within the earls' former park of Sutton Chase.⁶⁷ The enforcement of feudal tenures was used as late as 1590 when Ambrose Dudley claimed the lands of the Catholic Thomas Trussell through knight's service after Trussell was convicted of felony.⁶⁸

During the same period, Edward Arden was trying to consolidate his own position. By 1574, Arden's eldest daughter, Katherine, had married Edward Devereux, drawing Arden closer to the Devereux affinity and providing a possible conduit for the passage of Essex pedigrees connected with the Warwick earldom into the hands of Robert Glover.

⁶⁴ TNA, STAC5/A24/25, STAC5/A4/26.

⁶⁵ University of Nottingham Manuscript Collection, Middleton MSS, MiDa 80/7.

⁶⁶ 'Simon Harcourt', in *House of Commons*, ed. Hasler, II; 'William Stanford', in *House of Commons, 1509-1588*, ed. Stephen Bindoff, 3 vols (London: HMSO for the History of Parliament Trust, 1982) III.

⁶⁷ *VCH Warks.*, 4: 235-6.

⁶⁸ TNA, C54/1286; many thanks to Professor Glyn Parry for passing on this reference.

Documents relating to the marriage were witnessed by Arden Waferer.⁶⁹ In November 1574 Edward Arden became sheriff of Warwickshire.⁷⁰ At the same time, rumours about the earl of Leicester's involvement with Essex's wife, Lettice Knollys, began to be circulated and were referred to in later letters between the earl and Thomas Wood.⁷¹ In 1576 the Dudleys' patronage connections with the reforming Protestants were shaken by the suppression of the prophesyings and Arden was appointed to the Warwickshire bench.⁷² Although Arden was unable to maintain his position as a justice, it is likely that he still had access to influential connections. In autumn 1580, Henry Goodere and the lawyer Robert Stanford (d. 1616) were appointed to resolve the continuing dispute between Arden and Ralph Rugeley.⁷³ Stanford was 'the conforming head of a Catholic family' who was said to be closely linked to Lord Paget.⁷⁴ He was also the brother of the William Stanford who had been one of the chief agitators at Drayton. When Goodere and Stanford were appointed to lead the commission to resolve Arden and Rugeley's dispute, Goodere, Arden and William Stanford had very recently been under investigation for

⁶⁹ BCA, MS3375/434072, February 1574/5.

⁷⁰ *List of Sheriffs for England and Wales ... to A.D. 1831*, PRO Lists and Indexes IX (London, 1898; reprinted New York, 1963).

⁷¹ Patrick Collinson, 'Letters of Thomas Wood, Puritan, 1566-1577', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Special Supplement, 5 (November 1960), xviii-xix, 9-11.

⁷² Enis, 'Justices of Elizabethan Warwickshire', 14.

⁷³ BCA, MS917/498 (Norton 210).

⁷⁴ Andrew Thrush and John P. Ferris, eds., 'Sir Robert Stanford', *House of Commons, 1604-1629*, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), VI, 413-4.

their role in the disturbances at Drayton Bassett.⁷⁵ Given that the appointment came from Star Chamber, this suggests competing power structures and complex political relationships both at court and in the Midlands.

As Arden and the Dudleys contested their positions in Warwickshire, the place of Turchil in the descent of the earldom of Warwick became the cause of detailed investigation. Arden benefitted from a Dudley claim that was neither straightforward nor unassailable and that reflected the complicated history of the Warwick earldom. In 1565, the Dudleys' brother-in-law, the earl of Huntingdon, investigated his own right to the earldom through his great-grandmother, Margaret, countess of Salisbury.⁷⁶ A rift between Huntingdon and the Dudleys seems unlikely, even if their relationship was more ambivalent than generally believed. However, given that Huntingdon's claim to the throne was central to his depiction in *Leicester's Commonwealth*, his interest in the Warwick earldom, itself a step on the way to his recognition as heir to the duke of Clarence, may mean that Huntingdon really did have ambitions currently still obscured.⁷⁷ Other possible claimants included the Howards, whose arms included the *chequy or et azure* that showed descent from the counts of Meulan, used 'by the related comital houses of Leicester, Warwick

⁷⁵ TNA, STAC5/A24/25. Depositions were still being taken in early 1580. Some of the ring-leaders were fined but the sources do not provide a final conclusion to the case.

⁷⁶ Henry E. Huntington Library, Hastings MS10328. Hereafter HEHL.

⁷⁷ Peck, *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 29-30, 66, 73, 86, 88-90. Huntingdon remains something of an unknown quantity and Peck has noted that 'we are left unable fully to explain the vehemence of the *Commonwealth's* professed fears about him'.

and Warenne' from the twelfth century.⁷⁸ As well as the counts of Meulan, the Howards could claim descent from Joan Beauchamp, daughter of the eleventh earl of Arundel and coheir of her brother, twelfth earl of Arundel and ninth earl of Surrey.⁷⁹ Joan was also the wife of William Beauchamp, Lord Bergavenny, son of the eleventh earl of Warwick and ancestor of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury.⁸⁰ These connections were complicated but no more so than those proclaimed by the Dudleys. The death and attainder of Norfolk in 1572 eliminated any Howard threat but Shrewsbury's connections were a potential thorn in the Dudleys' side. The marriage of John Talbot, first earl of Shrewsbury, to Margaret Beauchamp (daughter of Richard Beauchamp and Elizabeth Berkeley and the woman from whom the Dudleys claimed the earldom), had contributed to uncertainty over the descent of the Beauchamp and Berkeley lands that the Dudleys themselves exploited in their revival of the Berkeley lawsuit.⁸¹ After Ambrose Dudley's creation as earl of Warwick, Robert wrote to the earl of Shrewsbury to inform him that

⁷⁸ David Crouch, *The Birth of the Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900-1300* (London: Routledge, 2005), 157. The earldom of Warenne was held by the Howards in the sixteenth century as the courtesy title of earl of Surrey.

⁷⁹ Christine Carpenter, 'Beauchamp, Joan, (1375-1435)' in 'Beauchamp, William (V), (c. 1343-1411)', *ODNB*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

⁸¹ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 339-40. The complexity of the Warwick estate is discussed in Carpenter, *Locality and polity*, 439-447. Carpenter makes two particularly important points – firstly, that the division of the Warwick estate in the 1440s resulted in 'a rough and ready division that paid relatively little regard to absolute legal rights' and secondly, that 'the really serious conflicts over the inheritance were between Richard Neville and his wife's three half-sisters and their husbands.'

Elizabeth had restored the Dudleys to ‘the name of Warwick’.⁸² *Leicester’s Commonwealth* explicitly depicted Shrewsbury, ‘a man of the most ancient and worthiest nobility of our realm’, as another of Leicester’s political victims and an example of ‘how little accompt he [Leicester] maketh of all the ancient nobility of our realm’.⁸³ Martha Driver has identified a Talbot claim to the Warwick earldom in a poem of John Lydgate’s written for Margaret Beauchamp and Griffith has also suggested that ‘the decorative images in the mid-fifteenth-century Shrewsbury Talbot Book of Romances (British Library, Royal MS 15. E. VI) reveal, albeit obliquely, a competing interest to the earldom during the Kingmaker’s lifetime’.⁸⁴ The common ancestry of the Talbots and the Dudleys was acknowledged by the earl of Leicester’s use of Shrewsbury’s manuscripts and several Talbot descents were copied in the 1570s, including by Robert Glover as part of his research into the descent of the Warwick earldom.⁸⁵

The statement of the younger Henry Goodere that Arden had some claim to the Warwick earldom makes it tempting to assume that such a claim was made. This was not the case.

⁸² Adams, ‘Of that countrye’, 321.

⁸³ Peck, *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, 115.

⁸⁴ Driver, ‘Representing Women in Stories of Guy of Warwick’, 150-51; Griffith, ‘The Visual History of Guy of Warwick’, 127.

⁸⁵ BL, MS Harley 807, fols. 54v-58r. Adams has identified Shrewsbury and Leicester as friends but formal professions of friendship amongst the nobility does not exclude the possibility of political rivalry; Adams, ‘Heralds and the Elizabethan court’, in *Heralds and heraldry*, 12, 15-6. Dudley’s request to Shrewsbury for documents connected with the Berkeley inheritance does not necessarily indicate friendly co-operation between the two men. Given that the case was being pursued in the name of the queen, it is not clear how Shrewsbury could have refused.

Arden's response to the Beauchamp appropriation of Turchil was not to lay claim to the earldom of Warwick but to refute Turchil's status as earl. This was made explicit in Glover's later research and was referred to in the Arden pedigree in the visitation of Warwickshire made in 1619, in which Turchil was described as 'by some formerly and ignorantly made Earle of Warwick but certayne it is he was Lord of Warwick at the conquest tyme'.⁸⁶ By acknowledging that Turchil was lord of Warwick but not the earl, Arden had two aims that were nevertheless closely linked. The first of these was to prove that as Curdworth had descended to Arden through Turchil, who had held the manor before the earldom of Warwick existed, the Dudleys' had no rights over either the manor of Curdworth or Arden. The second of Arden's aims, part of his defamation of the earls as upstarts, was to show that Dudley pedigrees were fictional documents designed to uphold a lordship that they did not possess and to which they had no right.

Between 1572 and 1582, the heralds Robert Cooke and Robert Glover produced, copied and consulted a wide range of documents connected with the descent of the Ardens and the Dudleys.⁸⁷ By the late 1570s Glover's friend, the Warwickshire antiquary, Henry Ferrers, was also researching Warwickshire pedigrees. In 1577/8, Ferrers produced a list of the peerage and gentry of Warwickshire that may have been preliminary research for a

⁸⁶ *The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the Year 1619*, ed. John Fetherston, Harleian Society, 12 (London, 1877), 176.

⁸⁷ Appendix 4: MS sources connected to the descent of the earls of Warwick, the Dudley family and the Arden family made or used by the heralds, 1572-1582.

longer study to include a history of the earls of Warwick.⁸⁸ Griffith has questioned ‘disinterested antiquarianism or scholarship’ as an adequate explanation for such projects and Ferrers’ involvement moved the pursuit of Warwickshire pedigrees from the professional circle of the heralds into the gentry and the peerage.⁸⁹ Henry Ferrers came from a long-established Warwickshire family connected to the same circle as Edward Arden.⁹⁰ Ferrers’ uncle, Lord Windsor (d. 1575), was an unrepentant Catholic who lived in Italy for much of Elizabeth’s reign, where he was visited in the early 1570s by Philip Sidney.⁹¹ By the early 1580s the new Lord Windsor, Ferrers’ cousin, was part of the circle of his other cousin, the earl of Oxford, and Philip Howard. In 1581 Windsor was both Oxford’s second in the *Callophissus* challenge organised by Philip Howard and in which Philip Sidney took the role of the Blue Knight, and one of the four *Foster Children of Desire* in the court entertainment written by Sidney.⁹² Henry Ferrers’ research,

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Berry, *Henry Ferrers, an Early Warwickshire local antiquary, 1550-1633*, Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, 16 (Oxford: Dugdale Society, 1965), 27, 33-4. Ferrers’ list can be viewed at <https://archive.org/details/collectaneatopog08londnuoft>.

⁸⁹ Griffith, ‘Owners and Copyists’, 209.

⁹⁰ John Fox, ‘The Bromes of Holton Hall, A Forgotten Recusant Family’, *Oxoniensia*, 68 (Oxford: 2003), 69-88. Fox provides an excellent overview of the Brome, Ferrers and Windsor families. He also notes that the Windsors deserve more attention as a recusant family and that Henry Ferrers was probably a more committed recusant than his current reputation suggests.

⁹¹ Michael Brennan, ‘A Sidney Chronology’, in Margaret P. Hannay, Michael G. Brennan and Mary Ellen Lamb, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Sidneys, 1500-1700* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 80.

⁹² Alan Stewart, ‘Philip Sidney’, in *Ashgate Research Companion to the Sidneys*, 46.

undertaken during a time when Arden's dispute with Leicester and friction at court was at its most intense, may have been politically motivated.⁹³

Glover and Cooke produced at least five full descents between 1572-82 (four for the Dudleys, one for Arden), of which three were finished products. Around eight related documents and notebooks also survive, including detailed copies of Arden's charters and it is possible more remain to be found or re-categorised. Attribution of some manuscripts to individual heralds is a challenge. Uncertain attributions have become widely circulated and not enough attention has been paid to the context of production.⁹⁴ Personal relationships between the heralds and patronage relationships with the nobility involved with the College of Arms were complicated and sometimes difficult.⁹⁵ The heralds had multiple professional connections with the Marshal's office, assorted patrons and ancillary staff including painters and draughtsmen as well as their private practices as

⁹³ Camden later praised Ferrers as a friend and his surviving manuscripts were used by both Camden and Dugdale. Berry, *Henry Ferrers*, 33-7.

⁹⁴ For example, BL, MS King's 396 and Pierpont Morgan, MS M.956 have been attributed to Robert Cooke on the basis of strong similarities between the scripts. However, a comparison of the portraits reveals substantial differences. MS King's 396 has been dated to 1567 on the basis of the list of Elizabeth's New Year's gifts and further used to attribute Penn. State MS Codex 1070 to Cooke, even though there are several differences in script and style, for example, the formation of the letter 'r' in 'Erle'. The pedigree that we know was by Cooke, Longleat MS 249, has similarities to MS Codex 1070 but clear differences to both MS King's 396 and MS M. 956. A more detailed and coherent study of these and related documents is needed before definite attributions can be made.

⁹⁵ Adams, 'The Heralds and the Elizabethan Court', in *Heralds and heraldry*, 10-13, 18-20.

genealogists.⁹⁶ Finished pedigrees were written using a formal hand that throws up only minor differences for comparison. Notes taken for personal use show wide variations in script, depending on the type of document being consulted or copied and the prevailing working conditions. A certain amount of collaboration took place and finished pedigrees were probably not the work of a single person. A detailed pedigree of the earl of Leicester from the mid-70s is considered to be Cooke's research written by Glover.⁹⁷ However, comparison of this pedigree with MS Codex 1070 suggests that they were written by the same person and the Codex is currently attributed to Cooke.⁹⁸ A summary of MS Codex 1070 also exists yet these documents have never been studied together.⁹⁹ In the early 1580s Glover produced a pedigree for Arden which he credited to himself and Cooke but which is entirely in Glover's hand.¹⁰⁰ This pedigree not only contradicted the pedigrees produced in the early to mid-70s, it also contradicted Cooke's notes and made claims for Arden that were potentially deeply offensive to the Dudleys. Cooke and

⁹⁶ Thomas Lant (1554-1601), who made the drawings of Philip Sidney's funeral, was employed as a painter and draughtsman for several years before he secured a post as a herald.

⁹⁷ Adams, 'The Heralds and the Elizabethan Court', in *Heralds and heraldry*, 16; CA, MS Num. Sch. 13/1.

⁹⁸ University of Pennsylvania State, MS Codex 1070, Descent of the earls of Leicester and Chester.

Hereafter Univ. Penn. State. Appendix 5: Univ. Penn. State, MS Codex 1070, fol. 1v, opening inscription.

Document online at <http://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/PennManuscripts/html/mscodex1070.html>. The commentary on this website, also repeated elsewhere, concerning Robert Dudley's absence among his siblings at the end of the pedigree is incorrect. He is represented by the coat of arms.

⁹⁹ CA, MS Num. Sch. L15 fols. 91-105.

¹⁰⁰ CA, MS Num. Sch. 3/44; Appendix 6: Final inscription on pedigree of Edward Arden attributed to Robert Cooke and Robert Glover, c. 1581-3, written by Robert Glover.

Glover made copious notes on the same descents and they may have had different approaches to reconciling their genealogical research with their professional and patronage connections. Cooke's well-known patronage relationship with the Dudleys may have made him more reluctant to challenge their descent.¹⁰¹ Glover's reputation for independence and his research into the Warwick and Leicester earldoms and the Sutton barony as well as his work for Edward Arden suggests that his relationship with the Dudleys was ambivalent. Although Glover produced a descent of the Sutton barony in 1581 and drafted a dedication to the earl of Leicester for a collection of European lineage disputes in January 1582, it is not clear that these works were either finished or presented to the earl.¹⁰² In contrast to Cooke, most of Glover's material can be seen in notebooks that reveal the extent of his research and the breadth of sources consulted. Glover's closest political connection was Lord Burghley and it was Burghley who had arranged the appointment of Glover as Portcullis pursuivant in the 1560s.¹⁰³ In 1587, under attack by his fellow herald William Dethick, Glover asked Burghley for protection 'wher I never yet missed it in tyme of need'.¹⁰⁴ Glover's research into the genealogy of the Dudleys and Edward Arden may have required the protective cover of Burghley's patronage and in 1584 Glover drafted a letter to the earl of Leicester refuting an

¹⁰¹ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 317.

¹⁰² BL, MS Harley, 6182; CA, MS Vincent 76.

¹⁰³ Pamela Selwyn, 'Such special bookes of Mr Somersettes as were sould to Mr Secretary': the fate of Robert Glover's collections', in James P. Carley and Colin G. C. Tite, eds., *Books and Collectors 1200-1700: Essays presented to Andrew Watson* (London: British Library, 1997), 389.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

accusation of Catholic sympathies.¹⁰⁵ Both heralds also used the Rous rolls. In 1572 Robert Glover made his own copy of the English roll.¹⁰⁶ Glover's books, inventoried shortly after his death in 1588, revealed his copy of the English Rous roll as well as the first known mention of the *Beauchamp Pageants*, suggesting 'a particular interest in Rous's histories of the Earls of Warwick'.¹⁰⁷ On Robert Cooke's death in 1593, the English Rous roll was among his papers.¹⁰⁸ The Latin roll may already have been in the hands of Edward Arden. It was referred to in the Visitation of 1619 and in the 1630s it was owned by Edward's son, Robert Arden.¹⁰⁹

The earliest finished pedigree from the manuscripts under consideration is MS Codex 1070, helpfully dated 1573 and provisionally attributed to Cooke. It was made for the earl of Leicester and presented 'proof' of his descent from the early earls of Leicester and Chester. Turchil is described as 'Turquinus, erle of Warwike', a description repeated on the highly detailed pedigree produced for Leicester in the mid-1570s.¹¹⁰ Turchil appears on this pedigree with the shield *chequy or et azure a chevron ermine* assigned to Guy of Warwick on the Rous Rolls and incorporated by the Dudleys into their own arms (figure 3 & figure 4). Notes of Cooke's from around the same time refer to Turchil as 'Turquenius', in 'a brief rehersall of the erles of Warwyk from Guy erle of Warwyk, who

¹⁰⁵ BL, Cotton MS Titus B, vii. fol. 14, 24 Jan 1584.

¹⁰⁶ Griffith, 'Owners and Copyists', 219; Glover's copy is now Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 967.

(Hereafter Bod. Lib.)

¹⁰⁷ Griffith, 'Owners and Copyists', 219.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 212-4.

¹⁰⁹ *Visitation, 1619*, 176; Griffith, 'Owners and Copyists', 214-5.

¹¹⁰ Univ. Penn. State, MS Codex 1070, fol. 2v; CA, MS Num. Sch. 13/1.

lyved in the year of o[u]r lord god 924'.¹¹¹ During the same period, Glover copied several pedigrees concerned with the earldom of Warwick's descent.¹¹² One of these was obtained by Glover from Lord Dudley via a source whose name has been redacted. This descent, supplemented down one side by that of the Berkeleys, ended with the Dudleys' elder brothers, Henry, Thomas and John, and probably dated from the 1540s.¹¹³ Another Warwick descent, which also included the early descent of the earls of Leicester, was copied from a pedigree owned by the earl of Essex (d. 1576), given to Glover by Essex's secretary, Edward Waterhouse.¹¹⁴ It shows Turchil as 'Tarquin, earl of Warwick' with the arms assigned to Guy of Warwick. A detailed Talbot and Beauchamp pedigree in the same notebook also included 'Tarquin' as earl of Warwick.¹¹⁵

In order to uphold their right to the earldom, the Dudleys needed to portray themselves as heirs to the legendary Guy. As Griffith has written, 'By the middle of the fifteenth century Guy had effectively become the property of the earls of Warwick, just as Warwick itself had become their town'.¹¹⁶ In 1565, the year of Ambrose Dudley's marriage to Anne Russell, William Copland printed the first complete text of the legend, including an 'injunction to the reader to inspect in Warwick a tapestry depicting Guy's

¹¹¹ CA, MS Num. Sch. M 1bis, fol. 18. Notes in the same notebook but in a different hand also refer to 'Turquinus erle of Warwyke', CA MS Num. Sch. M 1bis, fol. 98v.

¹¹² BL, MS Harley 807.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, fols. 17-20.

¹¹⁴ BL, MS Harley 807, fols. 22-24. Andrew Lyall, 'Waterhouse, Sir Edward, (1535-1591)', *ODNB*.

¹¹⁵ BL, MS Harley 807, fols. 54v-58r.

¹¹⁶ Griffith, 'The Visual History of Guy of Warwick', 120-1.

battle with a dragon'.¹¹⁷ During Elizabeth's visit to Warwick in 1572, the Recorder Edward Aglionby welcomed her with a speech so partisan as to suggest that it had been submitted to the Dudleys for approval. In a potted history of the town, Aglionby noted its existence as a Roman town named Carwar, its renaming as Warwick by the Anglo-Saxons, 'of noble earles of thesame, namely one Guido or Guye', of 'the countenance and liberality of the Earles of that place, especially of the name of Beauwchampe' and the honour done to the town by Elizabeth's creation of a new earl, 'a noble and valiaunt gentleman lyneally extracted out of the same house'.¹¹⁸ The Dudley devotion to Guy was such that until 1590 Ambrose Dudley was still paying the salary of the keeper of Guy's sword.¹¹⁹ However, the Beauchamp establishment of Turchil and his father Alwin as the links between the post-Conquest earls and the legendary Guy created an unusual problem for the Dudleys because Edward Arden was still alive, still in Warwickshire and still a Catholic.

Although the Dudleys continued to claim a pre-Conquest ancestry through the existing connection between Guy of Warwick and the Warwick earldom, the weaknesses in the Dudleys' position gave the Leicester earldom a new prominence in their search for authority in the Midlands. Both earldoms were essential to the Dudleys' ascendancy in

¹¹⁷ Siân Echard, 'Guy and Bevis in Early Print Illustration' and Andrew King, 'Guy of Warwick and the Faerie Queene', in Wiggins and Field, eds., *Icon and Ancestor*, 156-7, 174.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Goldring, 'The queen's entertainment at Warwick, 12-19 August 1572', in Elizabeth Goldring, Jacqueline Eales, Elizabeth Clarke and Jayne Archer, eds., *John Nichol's The Progresses and Public Processions of Elizabeth I: a new edition of early modern sources*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), II, 27-34.

¹¹⁹ TNA, E101/632/6; many thanks to Professor Glyn Parry for passing on this reference.

the region as well as crucial elements in legitimising their rights to office. The earldom of Leicester had already been the focus of the lavish *Eulogia* created by William Bowyer in 1567 and this was followed by the 1573 descent claiming Robert Dudley's ancestry from the earlier earls of Leicester and Chester.¹²⁰ The descent made frequent allusions to offices held by these earls and reflected the *Eulogia* in which the connection between the earldom of Leicester and the lord stewardship was emphasised.¹²¹ The antiquity and royal connections of the earldom of Leicester were also re-stated. As the descent noted, the earldom of Leicester was not in abeyance before the grant to Robert Dudley in 1564 but functioned as part of the earldom then duchy of Lancaster, into which it had been incorporated during the later thirteenth century.¹²² It also re-affirmed the historic connection between the earldoms of Warwick and Leicester through the description of Robert Beaumont's brother, Henry, earl of Warwick, from which Henry 'is descended Ambrose Erle of Warwicke brother to Robert Erle of Leicester'.¹²³ The Beaumont connection formed the central motif for the 1573-6 pedigree (figure 5) which showed the descent of the Sutton barony, the source of the Dudleys' claim to nobility through their father's family.¹²⁴ Robert Beaumont, 'le Bossu', earl of Leicester, (d. 1168) is the central figure of twenty-one nobles and the visual layout suggested that the earldom of Leicester was connected to Sayerus of Sutton, supposed Saxon ancestor of the Suttons of Dudley.

¹²⁰ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 316-7.

¹²¹ Ibid., 316.

¹²² Univ. Penn. State, MS Codex 1070, fol. 8r; Levi Fox, 'The Honor and Earldom of Leicester, Origin and Descent 1066-1399', *English Historical Review*, 54, 216 (July 1939), 397.

¹²³ Univ. Penn. State, MS Codex 1070, fol. 2v.

¹²⁴ CA, MS Num. Sch. 13/1; Adams, 'Of that countrye', 322.

Beaumont is flanked on the pedigree by Sayerus de Quency, earl of Winchester and the husband of Beaumont's grand-daughter, Margaret, and Geoffrey Pagnell, Beaumont's brother, described as earl of Somery in the right of his wife.¹²⁵ The controversies surrounding the attempts of the Dudleys to connect Sir Richard Sutton with 'Sayerus, Lord Sutton of Holderness' were long-running and it seems as if this was a connection that the Dudleys struggled to make stick.¹²⁶ However, this controversy has obscured the Dudleys' attempt to find a link between the Sutton barony and the earldom of Leicester that lead them to the Saxon earldom of Mercia.

During the 1575 festivities to mark Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth, the Saxon kingdom of Mercia was used as a metaphor for the Midlands and the feast of the Mercian king, Kenelm, alleged builder of Kenilworth was celebrated during the queen's stay.¹²⁷ In his account of the festivities, Robert Langham described the Midlands as 'this Marchland that stories called Mercia [...] the fourth of the seven kingdoms that the Saxons had' and listed the shires that formed it as Gloucester, Warwick, Worcester, Chester, Derby and Stafford as well as 'Hereford, Oxford, Buckingham, Hertford, Huntingdon, half of

¹²⁵ Fox, 'Honor and Earldom of Leicester', 391.

¹²⁶ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 313-315.

¹²⁷ Elizabeth Goldring, 'Langham's Letter', in Goldring, Eales, Clarke & Archer, eds., *Progresses and Public Progressions of Queen Elizabeth I*, 253. Either Langham's Saxon history was better than his spelling or he had a good editor, as the name and dates given for Kenulph are essentially correct; see Ann Williams, Alfred P. Smyth and David P. Kirby, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain, England, Scotland and Wales c. 500-c. 1050* (London: Seaby, 1991), xxvi.

Bedford, Northampton, part of Leicester and also Lincoln'.¹²⁸ Whatever the controversies surrounding the publication of *Langham's Letter*, it is clear that it circulated widely in print and manuscript.¹²⁹ The concept of Mercia placed the Dudleys' Midland territorial interests in an historic context and suggested that they were part of an ancient whole. In 1066, Edwin and Morcar, the sons of Algar of Mercia, had been the most powerful men in the Midlands.¹³⁰ Morcar was also the leading land-owner in Holderness, the region that the Dudleys claimed as the lordship of their alleged Saxon ancestor, Sayerus Sutton.¹³¹ In 1071, Edwin and Morcar lost their estates after a failed rebellion against William the Conqueror which resulted in Edwin's death and the captivity of Morcar.¹³² A putative link between Edwin of Mercia and the first Beaumont earl of Warwick had been copied by Robert Glover in 1572, in which Edwin was shown as the first husband of Turchil's supposed daughter, Margaret, prior to her marriage to Henry Beaumont.¹³³ This fictitious marriage did not resurface in other documents produced between 1572 and 1582 but the attempt to link the pre-Conquest earls of Mercia with the post-Conquest earls of

¹²⁸ 'Langham's Letter', in Goldring, Eales, Clarke & Archer, eds., *Progresses and Public Progressions of Queen Elizabeth I*, 242-3.

¹²⁹ Elizabeth Goldring, "'A mercer ye wot as we be", the authorship of the Kenilworth Letter reconsidered', *English Literary Renaissance* (2008), 245-69.

¹³⁰ Stephen Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia, Lordship and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 295; Williams, 'A Vice-Comital Family', 287.

¹³¹ Barbara English, *The Lords of Holderness, 1086-1260: a study in feudal society* (Oxford: Oxford University of Press for the University of Hull, 1979), 7.

¹³² Baxter, *Earls of Mercia*, 297.

¹³³ Bod. Lib., MS Ashmole 967, fol. 36v.

Warwick and Leicester did, suggesting that the Mercian connection had become central to the Dudleys' activities. Some of Edwin's lands in the Midlands went to the Norman William Fitzansculf, ancestor of the Sutton lords of Dudley. In 1086, Fitzansculf held Birmingham, Edgbaston and manors in Aston including Aston itself, Erdington, Witton, Handsworth and Perry and Little Barr.¹³⁴ Other Aston manors held by Fitzansculf's descendants included Bordesley, Little Bromwich, Duddeston, Saltley and Nechells. In the 1570s, Castle Bromwich, Water Orton, Saltley, Duddeston and Bordesley were owned by Arden and it was mills in Duddeston and Saltley that were the focus of the dispute between Arden and Holte.¹³⁵

In 1578/9, Robert Glover worked at Arden's home in Warwickshire, producing 'something like an Arden cartulary'.¹³⁶ Glover's interest in Arden's charters has been seen as purely genealogical even though it is clear that the cartulary did not contain the usual materials needed for a pedigree.¹³⁷ Sixty-one charters were transcribed and over twenty-five seals were copied. The charters copied show the same connections again and again and those selected all date from the twelfth to the mid-fifteenth centuries. Most of the documents referred to grants or indentures relating to the Arden estate at Pedimore, Minworth and Curdworth and where no date was given, this was noted by Glover. The

¹³⁴ *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, ed. L. Salzman, 8 vols, (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 7:58-72. Hereafter *VCH Warks*. BL, MS Egerton 3789, fol. 10v for Fitzansculf in the Sutton descent.

¹³⁵ TNA, E178/2338; BCA, MS917/383 (Norton 155).

¹³⁶ Douglas Arden, 'A gift from Robert Glover, BL MS Egerton 3789, fols. 25r-32r', *The Coat of Arms*, series 3, I, pt. 2 (2005), 107.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*.

significance of Arden's ancestry is shown by the inclusion of Turchil's descendants from the time of William the Conqueror to around 1230.¹³⁸ In the same notebook, Glover included copies of charters concerning the Pagnells, seen as a link between the Somery and Beaumont families, as well as pre-Conquest charters and Bede's list of Saxon kings.¹³⁹ He also noted the difference in status between the post-Conquest earls of Warwick and the Saxon lords of Warwick in a list in which Turchil is shown as a baron and the Beaumonts (Newburgh) as the first earls.¹⁴⁰ This contradicted the pedigrees prepared for the earl of Leicester in the early 1570s in which Turchil was described as earl of Warwick at the time of the Conquest, a change that suggests Arden and Glover were prepared to challenge the earlier version of the earldom's descent.

In 1581, Robert Glover exhaustively traced the Dudley Sutton descent, not as part of a new genealogy but as a detailed investigation into that already proclaimed in the mid-1570s.¹⁴¹ Across fifty folios, Glover outlined the Sutton descent and its connection to families including Somery, Pagnell and Malpas, all of whose arms were included in those of the Dudleys. Glover also investigated the links between the Sutton barony and the Beaumont earls of Leicester and the connection between the Leicester earldom and the Saxon earldom of Mercia.¹⁴² The Mercian descent was shown from Leofric, 'earl of Leicester in the time of King Ethelbald of Mercia', through to Leofric, husband of

¹³⁸ BL, MS Egerton 3789, fol. 31r.

¹³⁹ BL, MS Egerton 3789, fols. 40r-42r, fols. 60r-63v.

¹⁴⁰ BL, MS Egerton 3789, fol. 116v.

¹⁴¹ BL, MS Harley 6182.

¹⁴² BL MS Harley 6182, fol. 12v.

Godiva, and ended with their grandson, Edwin, described as earl of Leicester and duke of Mercia at the time of the conquest.¹⁴³ A link between Edwin's descendants and the Beaumonts was provided by Robert, third earl of Leicester (Blanchemains) and his wife, Petronella de Grandmesnil, generally if incorrectly depicted as the daughter of the Warwickshire land-owner, Hugh de Grandmesnil.¹⁴⁴ Petronella and Robert were the parents of Margaret, co-heir of her brother, Robert (d. 1204) and wife of Sayer de Quincy, earl of Winchester.¹⁴⁵ Although the tenure and division of the Leicester earldom after 1204 became particularly complicated, Sayer and Margaret held at least half of the Leicester inheritance.¹⁴⁶ Their son, Roger/Robert (Glover used both names) married Hawise, the great-great-grand-daughter of Edwin of Mercia's alleged sister and co-heir, Lucy.¹⁴⁷ The descent produced in 1573 had already claimed Margaret as the ancestor of Robert Dudley. The marriage of Hawise and Roger/Robert therefore connected the descendants of Edwin of Mercia with those of the Beaumont earls of Leicester.¹⁴⁸ If the

¹⁴³ BL, MS Harley 6182, fols. 34r-35r. See *A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain*, 170, for further information.

¹⁴⁴ Fox, 'The Honor and Earldom of Leicester', 390-3, for Petronella and the English Grandemesnil inheritance. Blanchmains and Petronella's son, Robert de Breteuil (d. 1204), was the first use the cinquefoil that became the symbol of the earldom of Leicester. Crouch, *Birth of the Nobility*, 159.

¹⁴⁵ BL, MS Harley 6182, fol. 28r.

¹⁴⁶ Fox, 'The Honor and Earldom of Leicester', 393-6.

¹⁴⁷ BL, MS Harley 6182, fols. 32r, 35r. Katherine Keats-Rohan has shown that Lucy was not Edwin's sister, although she was probably his cousin. The confusion appears to have been widespread and was not necessarily a fiction created by Glover; <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~prosop/prosopeon/issue2-2.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ BL, MS Harley 6182, fol. 26v.

earls of Mercia were also earls of Leicester and if the Dudleys were descended from the Beaumonts – as already claimed in 1573 – then the Dudleys would be able to assert their overlordship not only over Arden through Turchil's subjection to the earls of Mercia but over all those manors which had belonged to Edwin of Mercia but had not become part of the patrimony of the earldom of Warwick.

In the same year, Robert Cooke finished the pedigree now at Longleat which opens with Guy of Warwick.¹⁴⁹ This restated the Dudleys' ancestral connection to Guy through Turchil and showed Guy with the Beaumont shield *chequy or et azure a chevron ermine* as well as the emblem of the bear and ragged staff most closely associated with the Beauchamps and widely used by the Dudleys. However, this did not mark the end of Arden's challenge to the Dudley appropriation of Turchil and he was prepared to press his case.¹⁵⁰ In the early 1580s, Robert Glover prepared an Arden pedigree, apparently in collaboration with Robert Cooke.¹⁵¹ This document, never fully finished, is also missing text from the end of the document, meaning that the exact date is unknown. Fortunately enough remains for it to be clear that the pedigree was made by at Edward Arden's request in order to provide an authoritative record of the Arden descent.¹⁵² This pedigree for Arden showed Turchil and his father Alwin as lords of Warwick rather than earls. Alwin was shown with the Beaumont shield descending from Guy of Warwick on the

¹⁴⁹ Longleat MS 249. See Ramsay, ed., *Heralds and heraldry*, plate 1, for the opening image of Felicia and Guy.

¹⁵⁰ It is still unclear to what extent Turchil owed allegiance to the earls of Mercia. Williams, 'A vice-comital family', 291; Baxter, *Earls of Mercia*, 246-7, 287-8.

¹⁵¹ CA, MS Num. Sch. 3/44.

¹⁵² Appendix 6.

Rous rolls and assigned to Guy and Turchil on the earlier Cooke pedigrees, making it clear that Arden was contesting the descent being put forward by the Dudleys (figures 6a & 6b). As Davies put it, ‘to challenge the authenticity and the exclusivity of a family’s coat of arms was [...] to impugn its honour in the most fundamental fashion’.¹⁵³ *Chequy or et azure a chevron ermine* was shown descending to the Beaumonts through their alliance with Turchil’s supposed daughter, Margaret. For Arden to commission a document that assigned the arms of the earldom of Warwick to his ancestors was an unmistakeable challenge. This was an extraordinary document to produce, given that it contradicted the whole edifice of the connection between the post-Conquest earldom of Warwick and Guy. One fictitious ancestor – Margaret, daughter of Turchil – became the means to challenge the fictitious descent of the Beauchamp earls of Warwick from Guy. To dismiss such manuscripts as Elizabethan hyperbole is to miss the point. Firstly, Margaret’s position as Turchil’s daughter was widely accepted, including by the scholarly Glover. Secondly, although Arden and Leicester were stretching connections to breaking point, we cannot assume that they acted in bad faith. Lineage was the primary factor in the transmission of land and status for centuries before their dispute, and remains a significant factor in a great many societies, including our own. The resort to lineage of Arden and Leicester grew out of the pressures created by competing elites but the Elizabethans did not invent the genealogical practices that went with these circumstances, they simply responded to new pressures by refining them, a response that has been identified as an obsession with genealogy. The Arden arms drawn by Glover at the end of the roll suggests that Arden was willing to give up *fess chequy or et azure* in

¹⁵³ Davies, *Lords and lordship*, 32.

favour of *fess cross compony or et azure* in support of his pedigree as a 'true' representation of the descent of the Arden family from Alwin and Turchil.¹⁵⁴

The success of Arden and his friends in sowing doubts about the Dudleys' claim to nobility can be seen in the response of the Dudley camp. This has particular consequences for our understanding of Philip Sidney's *Defense of Leicester*, described by Adams as 'a near-hysterical reaction'.¹⁵⁵ It was also the only one of Sidney's works apparently written for printing, a detail that suggests the widespread damage that attacks on the Dudleys' origins had caused.¹⁵⁶ Three contemporary versions of the *Defense* survive, including Sidney's original draft.¹⁵⁷ Although the only surviving manuscript copy with a date is dated 1582 (that in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), this is believed to be a mistake, following the position taken by Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten in the early 1970s.¹⁵⁸ The basis for this assumption lies in the belief that the *Defense* is a response to *Leicester's Commonwealth*, understandable given that the first line of the *Defense* refers to 'a book in form of dialogue to the defaming of the earl of Leicester'.¹⁵⁹ As *Leicester's Commonwealth* has been reliably dated to summer 1584, so it has followed that Sidney's *Defense* must have been composed shortly afterwards, and

¹⁵⁴ The Arden family continued using *ermine fess chequy or et azure*. See *Visitation, 1619*, 72.

¹⁵⁵ Adams, 'Of that countrye', 314.

¹⁵⁶ Henry R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 210.

¹⁵⁷ Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten, eds., *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 127-8.

¹⁵⁸ Duncan-Jones and van Dorsten, *Miscellaneous Prose*, 123-4.

¹⁵⁹ Peck, 'Defense of Leicester', 169.

this has remained the sole basis for the dismissal of the date on the document in Paris. Nevertheless, the *Defense* has always been a puzzle for scholars, who have noted that it serves as a defence of the Dudley lineage that is barely attacked in the *Commonwealth*. Duncan-Jones and van Dorsten described it as ‘totally inadequate’ as a response to the *Commonwealth*, a view summarised by Dwight Peck as ‘The customary appraisal [that] argues that Sir Philip unwisely shifts his defence from the moral allegations to the very minor problem of Leicester’s, and Sidney’s own, ancestry’.¹⁶⁰ Peck has also noted that the motivation for the *Defense* – the attacks on the Dudley claim to gentility – and the accusation that Lord Hastings murdered the sons of Edward IV, are not actually in *Leicester’s Commonwealth*.¹⁶¹

Either Sidney was not paying attention or the *Defense* is not a response to the *Commonwealth*, or at least not the version that was published in 1584. The possible existence of earlier drafts of the *Commonwealth* has been known for some time, although some claims have been given short shrift.¹⁶² Nevertheless, manuscripts and books defaming the earl of Leicester were in circulation during the early 1580s and some of these influenced the work published in 1584. When *Leicester’s Commonwealth* did appear, Sir Francis Walsingham stated that he had heard of plans for such a book a few years earlier.¹⁶³ This has been treated with varying degrees of interest by historians but a

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Peck, ‘Defense of Leicester’, 176, n. 14, 15.

¹⁶² Dwight Peck, ‘An Alleged Early Draft of Leicester’s Commonwealth’, *Notes and Queries*, July 1975, 295-6; ‘The Letter of Estate: an Elizabethan Libel’, *Notes and Queries*, 28, 1 (Feb 1981), 21-35.

¹⁶³ Peck, *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, 7.

letter written by William Herle to Lord Burghley in late 1583 confirms this. In December 1583 the priest, Hugh Hall, was in custody over his role in plotting the alleged assassination of the queen alongside Edward Arden and his son-in-law, John Somerville.¹⁶⁴ Hall was known to the Elizabethan regime and Herle reminded Burghley that the informant John Gilpin had come across Hall in Rouen in 1582, where he was smuggling books which described ‘the nobilyte, Cowncellors, & others well affected to God & our Sovereigne, in the sclanderest maner & most reprochefull that might be, onely the Erlle of Sussex & som others were reverentlye spoken of’.¹⁶⁵ These works, referred to as ‘Hydes bookes’, confirm that seditious books about Elizabeth’s councillors were being printed at the same time that rumours of an early draft of the *Commonwealth* reached Walsingham.¹⁶⁶ Given that Arden knew both Robert Persons and other candidates such as William Tresham, the rather circular debate over the authorship of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* is less relevant in this context than the likely existence of earlier drafts that may have contained a much more detailed attack on the social origins of the

¹⁶⁴ TNA, SP12/164/77.

¹⁶⁵ BL MS Cotton Caligula CVIII fols. 204r-206v, transcript available at www.livesandletters.ac.uk/herle/letters/046.html. Many thanks to Professor Glyn Parry for passing on this reference.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Hyde’ is possibly Thomas Hide, author of *A Consolatorie Epistle*, see Lucy Wooding, ‘Hide, Thomas (1524-1597)’, *ODNB*. However, a more intriguing possibility is that the reference is to the antiquarian and scholar, David Hyde, about whom we know very little; Alfred C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose, 1559-1582* (London: Sands & Co., 1950), 24.

Dudleys.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Hall's presence in Rouen, the location of Persons' press, makes it possible that Hall, who had been lodging with Arden and his friends on and off for fourteen years, had a connection with Persons, who had stayed with Arden in the early years of the Jesuit mission.¹⁶⁸ Hugh Hall was only part of the traffic between England and cities including Rouen, Antwerp, St. Omer, Paris and Rome in the early 1580s. As well as William Tresham, other travellers connected to Arden included his nephews, Thomas and Francis Throckmorton, and Elizabeth Somerville, sister to Arden's son-in-law, who was later arrested alongside her brother and accused of distributing seditious books.¹⁶⁹ In February 1582, Sidney and Leicester travelled from England to Antwerp, a major centre for the European book trade, as part of the entourage accompanying the duke of Anjou.¹⁷⁰

Rather than Sidney, one of the sixteenth century's finest writers, writing a mis-directed, ill-conceived response to *Leicester's Commonwealth* that contained references to things that were not even in it, it is more likely that in the early 1580s Sidney had seen a written

¹⁶⁷ Peter Holmes, 'The Authorship of Leicester's Commonwealth', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 33, 3 (July 1982), 424-30; Alan H. Nelson, 'Who Didn't Write Leicester's Commonwealth? (Who Did?)', in Peter Beal, ed., *Discovering, Identifying and Editing Early Modern English Manuscripts*, English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700, 18 (London: British Library, 2013), 11-18. Nelson summarises the main arguments so far.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, SP12/164/77; *Miscellanea IV*, CRS (London: 1907), 114-5.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, SP12/163/55. Tresham's nephews, Edward and Ambrose Vaux, were also in Rome in spring 1582.

¹⁷⁰ Stewart, 'Philip Sidney', *Ashgate Research Companion to the Sidneys*, 47; Southern, *Recusant Prose*, 338, 347.

attack on Leicester that required exactly the kind of response that is the *Defense*. Sidney's emphasis on the Dudley connection to the barony of Sutton corresponds to the focus of Cooke's pedigree from the mid-1570s and Glover's research in 1581, as well as the rumours later remembered by Sampson Erdeswick. The bear and ragged staff was the emblem most closely associated with the Dudleys but this was a badge and not a coat of arms. The Dudley arms followed the common practice of placing the house from which nobility was derived in the top right-hand corner if holding the shield (dexter chief).¹⁷¹ This position was generally occupied by the lion rampant of the Suttons.¹⁷² To deny the Dudley descent from the Suttons of Dudley was a repudiation of their claim to nobility that left them without lineage and was therefore a matter of huge importance that they needed to contest at all costs. Previous Dudley attempts to dispel these rumours are implied in the *Defense*, given that Sidney wrote: 'alas good railer, you saw the proofs were clear, and therefore even for honesty sake were contented to omit them'.¹⁷³ Sidney's intention to print the *Defense* shows how widespread such rumours had become and how clearly the Dudleys and their friends understood that silence was inadequate as a response. This was explicitly addressed by Sidney in his justification for the piece, in

¹⁷¹ The British Armorial Bindings Database, a joint collaboration between the Bibliographical Society of London and the University of Toronto Library, uses the earl of Leicester's arms as an example of an early modern coat and includes a useful guide to heraldry; <https://armorial.library.utoronto.ca/>.

¹⁷² The portrait, *Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester with a Dog*, c. 1564, now in the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon, shows the Somery two lions *passant* at dexter chief, a coat also linked to the Sutton descent. The Dudley arms generally showed the Sutton lion *rampant*. The portrait is reproduced in colour in Ramsay, ed., *Heralds & heraldry*, plate 51.

¹⁷³ Peck, 'Defense of Leicester', 174.

which he explained, ‘because that thou, the writer hereof [of the libel] dost most falsely lay want of gentry to my dead ancestors, I have to the world thought good to say a little’.¹⁷⁴ In 1582, the year Robert Glover dedicated a book on disputed noble descents to the earl of Leicester and probably prepared Arden’s pedigree, the year of renewed conflict between the Dudleys and the earl of Sussex, who had been calling Leicester an upstart since the early 1560s, attacking the Dudleys’ lineage was an active political strategy. In 1582, the only year found on any of the surviving versions of the *Defense*, a defence of the Dudleys’ ancestry was exactly what was called for. As part of the response to attacks on the Dudleys’ ancestry that may have included Harvey’s *Gratulationes* and almost certainly included Spenser’s lost work, the *Stemmata Dudleiana*, Sidney’s *Defense* not only makes sense, it shows how wounding the attacks were.¹⁷⁵

However, events may have overtaken plans for the *Defense* to be printed. In early November 1583 Edward Arden was arrested and accused of treason. In summer 1584 William Allen wrote in *A Defense of English Catholics* that Arden was brought down by ‘the malice of his great and potent professed enemy that many years hath sought his ruin’.¹⁷⁶ Arden’s wider connections were hinted at in *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, which saw his fall as part of a plot to bring down Sir Christopher Hatton.¹⁷⁷ The judicial process

¹⁷⁴ Peck, ‘Defense of Leicester’, 175.

¹⁷⁵ W.R. Orwen, ‘Spenser’s *Stemmata Dudleiana*’, *Notes and Queries*, 1 (January 1946), 9-11.

¹⁷⁶ William Allen, *A True, Sincere and Modest Defense of English Catholics that suffer for their faith both at home and abroad, against a false, seditious and slanderous libel entitled ‘The Execution of Justice’* (Rouen: 1584); modern edition, Robert Kingdon, ed., *The Execution of Justice and A Defense of English Catholics* (Ithaca: NY, Cornell University Press, 1965), 109.

¹⁷⁷ Peck, *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, 114.

that saw Edward Arden and his son-in-law, John Somerville, accused, indicted, tried and killed for treason, lasted a little over seven weeks. Arden's arrest and execution was commented upon by Richard Barret, Robert Persons, Robert Southwell, Juan Bautista de Tassis in Paris and Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador in London, several of whom referred to the framing of Arden and the involvement of Leicester.¹⁷⁸ Arden's estate was forfeit to the Crown and one of the last Saxon estates in England, first broken up by the Beaumont earls of Warwick and Leicester after the Conquest, was finally brought down by the Dudley earls of Warwick and Leicester five hundred years later. Seventy years after the death of Edward Arden, in the political landscape of republican England, Sir William Dugdale concluded in the *Antiquities of Warwickshire* that 'these hereditary *vicecomites* [Alwin and Turchil] were immediately Officers to the King and not to the Earles of Mercia'.¹⁷⁹

By challenging Leicester's ancestral claims, Edward Arden challenged the validity of the Dudley lordship in Warwickshire and by implication, in the country. The Dudley attempt to impose their authority in Warwickshire was not straightforward and the *Black Book* recounts a telling scene in 1576 when their main officer in the county, Sir John Hubaud, lost his temper with the burgesses of Warwick, angrily noting that when Sir George

¹⁷⁸ P. Renold, ed., *Letters of William Allen and Richard Barret, 1572-1598*, CRS, 58 (London: 1967), 60; Leo Hicks, ed., *Letters and Memorials of Father Persons*, CRS, 39, 2 vols (London: 1942), 1, 193; J. H. Pollen, ed., *The English Martyrs 1584-1603*, CRS, 5 (London: 1908), 305; *Calendar of Letters and State Papers, Spain, Simancas*, ed. M. Hume, 4 vols (London: HMSO, 1892-99) 3, 511-512; *Calendar State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, 1583-1584*, ed. Sophie C. Lomas, 23 vols (London: HMSO, 1914) 18, 651-2.

¹⁷⁹ Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 302.

Throckmorton was around, they did what they were told.¹⁸⁰ The pressure put on the Dudleys to prove their right to power – the sort that depended on a mythical Saxon past and the kind of ancient nobility ‘whereby men’s affections are greatly moved’, as the authors of the *Commonwealth* put it – should not be seen as resulting in antiquarian business with crests and badges and pedigree rolls and ostentatious showing-off by the earl of Leicester, it should be seen as resulting in political behaviour essential to the establishment of their position.¹⁸¹ The Dudleys had titles, wealth, land and the favour of the queen but their lineage made them vulnerable in the eyes of those who were keen to show that they represented the overthrow of civil society. Like the Protestant church depicted by Richard Bristow in his 1574 treatise, the Dudleys were deemed to lack ‘proof of lawful and lineal descent’.¹⁸²

Edward Arden was part of a network that was not necessarily united but which was, beyond a shadow of doubt, political. In 1580, Thomas Throckmorton and Ralph Sheldon were imprisoned in the government’s round-up of leading Catholics.¹⁸³ The following year, so were Sir Thomas Tresham and Sir William Catesby as part of the Elizabethan

¹⁸⁰ Henry Kemp, ed., *The Black Book of Warwick* (Warwick: 1898), 248-9.

¹⁸¹ Peck, *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, 127.

¹⁸² Richard Bristow, *A briefe treatise of diverse plaine and sure waies to finde out the truthe in this doubtful and dangerous time of Heresie* (Antwerp: 1574).

¹⁸³ *Miscellanea IV*, CRS, 27-8, 178-81. Sheldon’s apparent conformity was seen as a notable public relations victory by some of the Elizabethan regime. The authorship and motivation behind *A persuasion delivered to Mr Sheldon*, (att. Langdale, 1580) is unclear; Alexandra Walsham, *Church papists: Catholicism, conformity and confessional polemic in early modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993), 51.

regime's pursuit of Edmund Campion, one of the seminal political events of Elizabeth's reign.¹⁸⁴ Although the contacts of the Catholic and conservative gentry are generally considered to be with nobility who were 'peripheral to the Elizabethan establishment', it is possible that it was their continuing connections within the establishment that made some networks such a concern.¹⁸⁵ The dichotomy of Protestants and Catholics during the 1570s has served as a distraction from the ways in which Catholics like Edward Arden still functioned within a broad base of the politically active, a reflection of the patterns of behaviour identified in social relations.¹⁸⁶ A historiography of consensus among those closest to Elizabeth that requires that other interests were peripheral makes it difficult to understand the connections between the Catholic gentry and those described as 'Richard

¹⁸⁴ The trial and execution of Campion has provoked widespread debate and generated a huge literature. An account of Tresham's and Catesby's examination is in Anthony G. Petti, ed., *Recusant Documents from the Ellesmere Manuscripts*, CRS, 60 (London: 1968), 6-13. Kilroy, *Edmund Campion: Memory and Transcription*, 121-145, focuses on Sir Thomas Tresham in the light of the Tresham papers and buildings. See also Kilroy, *Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2015). Peter Lake and Michael Questier, 'Puritans, Papists and the "Public Sphere" in early modern England: the Edmund Campion affair in context', *The Journal of Modern History*, 72, 3 (Sept. 2000), 587-627 considers the connection between the pursuit of Campion and public discourse.

¹⁸⁵ Lake, 'The politics of "popularity"', 73.

¹⁸⁶ William Sheils, "'Getting on" and "getting along" in parish and town: Catholics and their neighbours in England', in Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk van Nierop and Judith Pollmann, eds., *Catholic communities in Protestant states: Britain and the Netherlands, c. 1570-1720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 68-83; Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton, eds., *Getting along? Religious identities and confessional relations in early modern England; essays in honour of Professor W. J. Sheils* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

II's men' by Sir Francis Knollys in January 1578.¹⁸⁷ This group, tentatively identified as including Sir James Croft, the earl of Sussex, Lord Henry Howard, Lord Paget, Charles Arundel, Sir Edward Stafford and possibly Sir Christopher Hatton, amounts to more than the 'smooth-tongued flatterers' described by Collinson, given that three of these men were privy councillors.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, a more detailed picture of political relationships during the 1570s would allow us to integrate these into events such as the proposed marriage of Elizabeth to the duc d'Anjou. As recent research has shown, the entertainment given at New Hall by the earl of Sussex in 1579 allowed Catholic and conservative nobility and gentry to show their support for a match strongly opposed by committed Protestants like the Dudleys.¹⁸⁹ Both the earl of Sussex and Sir Christopher Hatton acted as points of contact for those hostile to the political aims of the Dudleys and their associates. Sir Christopher Hatton, whose Catholic step-father, Richard Newport, was Henry Ferrers' great-uncle and a Warwickshire magistrate between 1547 and 1562, was particularly close to Edward Arden and his kinship network.¹⁹⁰ Initially at least, Arden's opposition to the earl of Leicester was not irrationally suicidal but part of an

¹⁸⁷ Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), 381.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Neil Younger, 'Drama, politics and news in the earl of Sussex's entertainment of Elizabeth I at New Hall in 1579', *The Historical Journal*, 58, 2 (June 2015), 343-366.

¹⁹⁰ Enis, 'Justices of Elizabethan Warwickshire', 3; the enduring connections between the Newport, Hatton and Ferrers families can be seen in Richard Newport's appointment of his brother-in-law, Edward Ferrers of Cock Bevington, as one of his executors in 1565; will of Richard Newport, TNA, PROB11/48, fols. 249r-250v.

environment in which Catholics were neither excluded from court politics nor circles close to the queen.

Arden's decade-long challenge to the Dudleys was part of an extremely tense political atmosphere. The Dudleys' attempt to counter Arden through genealogy and legal pressure shows how keen they were to avoid action that could be depicted as tyrannical. This did not work, as the production of *Leicester's Commonwealth* testifies. However, this indicates the scale of their task as much as their inclination to ride roughshod over Catholic interests. In the Midlands, the Dudleys were instrumental in disrupting the power of the resourceful and well-connected Catholic Throckmorton network. Why this was so is better explored through the Dudleys' role in Elizabeth's government rather than the alleged dastardliness of the earl of Leicester. The Dudley acquisition of titles and land was almost entirely dependent on the queen.¹⁹¹ In these circumstances, the creation of Ambrose Dudley as earl of Warwick, and Robert Dudley as earl of Leicester, can be seen as political appointments that they might not have sought solely for purposes of personal gain. The re-establishment of the Dudleys as the dominant magnates in the Midlands during Elizabeth's reign suggests that there was the need for a sole political authority in the region that probably had less to do with the continued practise of Catholicism than the issue of the succession, a question with which Arden and his connections were deeply concerned.¹⁹² Moreover, the loyalty to Elizabeth of Arden and his friends and relations was disputable and Arden willingly sheltered Robert Persons and the Marian priest Hugh

¹⁹¹ Adams, 'The Dudley clientele', 200.

¹⁹² Marie Axton, 'The Influence of Edmund Plowden's Succession Treatise', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 37, 3 (May 1974), 209-226.

Hall. The Dudleys enabled Elizabeth to exert control over the Midlands while allowing her to deny the charge that she was alienating the interests of specific groups. As Leicester wrote to Lord Burghley in November 1579, ‘Your lordship is a witness I trust that in all her services I have been a direct servant unto her, her state and crown, that I have not more sought my own particular profit than her honour’.¹⁹³ Leicester’s posthumous reputation shows that few have taken him at his word. At the same time, the historiography of Protestantism has masked the political activities of the Catholic and conservative nobility and gentry, depoliticising activities such as genealogy along the way. The connection between denigration of the Dudleys’ origins and the agenda of established political families is one way of re-integrating Catholic and conservative interests into Elizabethan politics as well as addressing Adams’s recent observation that historians ‘have failed to appreciate that “the ancient nobility” was one of the major political issues of the reign’.¹⁹⁴ Those who identified themselves with or among ‘the ancient’ attacked the Dudley ancestry as a deliberate political strategy. At a time of pan-European religious conflict, these were the politics of highly-educated elite groups in which confessional, political and territorial disputes were contested through powerful connections to family, history and land.

Figure captions:

Figure 1: arms of Edward Arden, c. 1579, bottom left, quartered with Throckmorton (graphic)

Detail of the lattice paned windows with roundels and shields of heraldic glass in the Drawing Room at Coughton Court, Warwickshire; image 153793.

¹⁹³ Reprinted in Adams, ‘Queen Elizabeth’s Eyes at Court’, 146.

¹⁹⁴ Adams, ‘Heralds and the Elizabethan Court’, in *Heralds and Heraldry*, 2.

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Figure 2: British Library, MS Additional 48976, fols. 29-34

Alwin, Turchil, Margaret, Henry Beaumont, Roger Beaumont on the English Rous roll.

(graphic)

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Figure 3: College of Arms, MS Num. Sch. 13/1 (detail)

Turchil as earl of Warwick on pedigree prepared for Robert, earl of Leicester, c. 1573-6.

(graphic)

© College of Arms

Figure 4: Portrait of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, with coat of arms showing quartering of *chequy or et azure a chevron ermine*, artist unknown, c. 1575.

(graphic)

© National Portrait Gallery, London

Figure 5: College of Arms, Num. Sch. MS 13/1 (detail)

Central stem of pedigree prepared for earl of Leicester with central figure of Robert, earl of Leicester and Sayerus Sutton, Lord of Holderness.

(graphic)

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Figure 6a: College of Arms, MS Num. Sch. 3/44 (detail)

Pedigree prepared by Robert Glover for Edward Arden, c. 1581-3.

(graphic)

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Figure 6b: College of Arms, MS 3/44 (detail)

Alwin with the arms assigned to Guy of Warwick and the Beaumont earls on pedigree prepared for Edward Arden by Robert Glover.

(graphic)

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